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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: DELEGATIONS INVESTIGATE ATTACK ON
CIVILIANS

REF: ANKARA 2441

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4(b),
(d)

11. (C) Summary: Following a September 29 attack on a minibus in southeastern Turkey that resulted in the deaths of 12 Turkish citizens, several delegations traveled to the site to investigate. As Turkish casualties mount in a series of attacks, mine explosions, and bombings from Sirnak to Izmir, GOT and parliamentary delegations are one way for Ankara to press the flesh and be seen to be addressing these pressing issues. End summary.

12. (SBU) On September 29, twelve Turkish citizens -- 5 temporary village guards, 2 voluntary village guards, and 5 civilians -- were killed in Besagac Village, Beytussebap District, Sirnak Province, near the border with Iraq, when, as they returned from work on a water pipeline project, their minibus came under heavy automatic gun fire from both sides of the road. The victims were laid to rest the following day before a crowd of 2,500.

13. (SBU) President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan both immediately issued statements condemning the attack -- the worst of this nature in years -- and blaming it on PKK terrorists. The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) issued a statement deploring the attack but also questioned the immediate assumption that the PKK was responsible. It criticized the government's continued offensive operations against the PKK throughout the southeast (reftel). According to a PKK website, the People's Defense Force (HPG) of the PKK blamed Jandarma Intelligence organization, JITEM, for the attack.

14. (SBU) As an initial response, the GOT sent State Minister Mehmet Simsek, Interior Minister Besir Atalay, and Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker to the region to express condolences to the families of the victims. On October 2, Turkish parliament's Human Rights Committee decided to send a multi-party delegation to the region to investigate the incident. DTP, among others, petitioned for such a visit. Delegation members included Zafer Uskul (Chairman, AKP), Mehmet Ekinci (MHP), Abdurrahman Kurt (AKP), Akin Birdal (DTP), and Malik Ejder Ozdemir (CHP). Kurt reportedly served as the interpreter from Kurdish to Turkish. Birdal tells us that mainstream daily "Hurriyet's" report that the commission concluded the PKK conducted the attack was incorrect;

Chairman Uskul in fact told the media that the delegation had not yet reached consensus about who carried out the attack. The delegation will complete its report after the post-Ramadan holiday (October 11-14).

15. (SBU) The opposition CHP also sent its own delegation, consisting of party whip Kemal Kilicdaroglu, Yilmaz Ates, Sevket Kose, Mevlut Coskuner and Hulusi Guvel to the region on October 2.

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